

Q: Good afternoon. Today is September 1st, 2016. My name is Anna Newman and I'm here at City Hall with Julius Breslouf. Together we are participating in the Newton Talks Oral History Project that is being conducted with the Newton Free Library, Historic Newton, and the Newton Senior Center. So, Mr. Breslouf, what is your connection to Newton?

A: Well, I've lived here over 50 years. My children went to Newton High School. And I have my own house as well there. That's the connection.

Q: So, what were you doing before you entered the service?

A: A pharmacist? The year I graduated Pharmacy School was May or June of '53 and I was at home working in a drugstore until I was drafted in November of '53 for two years.

Q: So, were you working in Newton?

A: No, I was working in Boston for several months before being drafted into the army.

Q: So, what was life like for you before you entered the service?

A: Happy to be out of school and I was-- I think I got out of high school in '49 to '53, so I was about 21 and still at home with my parents. I had a large family, six kids in my family, five of them were already married and away from the house. I knew it was going to be the final summer before I was drafted, so I just had a good time with friends and worked and was happy to pass the bullet and things like that.

Q: So, what did you miss most about home, aside from family and friends?

A: What did I miss the most?

Q: During your service.

A: Oh, during the service, my two years of service. Nothing spectacular I missed. I was overseas in Korea for 16 months. I had some training before going to Korea. And when the 16 months were served I was sent back home to be discharged, because I had done my term of service and anybody having less than 90 days left from their draft, I was discharged in about 22 months instead of 24. And what was that question again?

Q: So, what did you miss most about home while you were serving?

A: I guess just homesick, seeing my family, my sisters and brothers, and a lot of my friends.

Q: So, how did you join and why did you choose the specific branch that you were part of?

A: Well, I didn't join, I was drafted, so I was out of college in 1953 and I knew that I would be drafted, we all, I think at that time we knew we stood in short period of being drafted, actually drafted, and I was ordered by letter, but I don't remember it, I had to go to New Jersey, and that's where I first started my service to the army.

Q: So, were you upset to be drafted or were you just--

A: No, I was sort of rather happy to leave the house, because all of my brothers were in the service prior to me, and a new adventure. The Korean War had stopped. When I got over there there were no shootings or anything. They had stopped. The 38th Parallel, being north of that was the Korea that exists now, and the South Korea is where I spent all my 16 months.

Q: So, what specific branch were you part of?

A: The army, U.S. Army.

Q: And how did you adapt to the army life or the military life?

A: Very well I would say, no problems. I thought, I ended up in Korea for the 16 months, but before leaving the United States we were told that we would be landing in Japan and we would serve in Japan. There were a lot of U.S. forces in Japan. But it ended up I did stay in Japan for a week or so and I was transferred to Korea.

Q: And how did you adapt specifically to the physical regimen, the barracks and food and social life?

A: Very well. I mean I had a job and which to report to every morning where I was at, the Six Medical Depot, and we carried some medical supplies and human blood for people who might have an accident or that needed it. There were a lot of evacuation hospitals and I had a job, like an 8:00 to 5:00 job, and there was a lot of time to play bolly ball and adjusting to the weather was very nice, because it reminded me of the weather back home, winter, it has summer, so I had no problems adjusting.

Q: And where exactly did you serve? Do you remember arriving and what it was like when you got there?

A: Yes. There was a bunch of us. There were a bunch of us that were called out one morning from where I was in Japan, landing in Japan, and we were told, this 90 or so men were told, "You're going to be advancing to Korea." And from where I was in Yokohama there was a train that we boarded these hundred servicemen that were going to go to Korea rather than staying in Japan. And we went by train to the southern part of Japan. Did I just say Suzanne? No, Busan. We landed, we left Korea, we left Japan from Sasebo overnight to Busan, Korea, the southern part of Korea. After landing there there were 90 or a hundred guys who were called out to go to this place or this place, and I was called out to, by name call to be sent up to Yeong-do Po, Korea

near Seoul, so there was a driver there and we fell out, when we say fell out, we went out, followed him, and we were put in the car and taken to our final destination after being in Japan for a week, and then being displaced up to Busan and eventually Yeong-do Po near Seoul, the small town underneath, south of the 38th Parallel.

Q: And how did you stay in touch with your family and friends during this time?

A: By mail. There was sort of a tragic ending. I was going to get a ship back home, but I was notified by some people in where I was stationed for 16 months that I was needed down to see someone at the Red Cross in Seoul, and I found out, I learned that my father died of a heart attack, so then instead of being shipped over by ship I was flown home to San Francisco and then immediately I went home. I didn't get discharged for a couple weeks. I went home and I had the opportunity to go home. Then I went back down to where I was released, and my two years were up, shorter about a month or so.

Q: Did you find the mail to be sufficient in staying in touch?

A: Oh yeah, mail from my sisters, it was one sister and four brothers and they all had families, and my parents were along then and everybody was gone from the house where we lived. And the mail was fine. Every week or something I had something in the mail from someone.

Q: And so can you tell me about a few of your most memorable experiences, positive or negative?

A: Being there? No, nothing outstanding. I mean there were-- Oh, I do remember one thing that happened in the barracks that I was sleeping in. We had to pull duty every several days for four hours on, four off, and each night there was a call out for seven men and a Sargent to walk the area of where this Six Medical Depot was situated. And there was six or seven guys and one Staff Sargent that really were guard duty once a week at least, maybe sometimes one time, two

times a week there was someone called out that you wouldn't do your daily job. And one, they would come up and wake us up to go on duty, and whether it be 2:00 in the morning or 4:00 in the morning, I don't remember, but you didn't sleep, not steady for eight hours or so. But one of the men didn't report. He was drunk. And the Staff Sargent pulled out his gun. Everybody was just in awe. But it ended that the guy got in trouble. I don't remember what happened exactly. He wasn't ready for guard duty.

Q: Oh my gosh, that's crazy.

A: But I remember the Staff Sargent pulling out his gun. I don't know if that was--

Q: No yeah, that's crazy.

A: That was an experience. Oh, I was able to go back to Japan twice on leaves for seven days. I went back to Tokyo twice in the 16 months I was there. I tried to go to Shanghai. A lot of people that were there, the thing was you could go to Shanghai, Tokyo, Southern Japan, Northern, you would have your pick, but they stopped sending kids, guys to Shanghai. So it was a nice, not two weeks successively, a week and then maybe five months later another week we had an opportunity to travel back to Japan or Northern Japan or Southern Japan.

Q: And do you recall the day your service ended?

A: I went in November of '53. Oh, it was in maybe September, October of '55 that I was discharged, but I don't remember the exact day. It would be on some papers that I have at home.

Q: Was it a memorable day for you?

A: Yeah, not especially. I mean I was happy to get back home. It was fun being in the service really. I thought it was a great experience for myself.

Q: And what was it like once you got home to return to civilian life?

A: Oh I was eager to find a job and see, gather, not gather but see a lot of my friends who I grew up with. I lived in the West End, the Mass General Hospital Cambridge Street, so I lived in that area, and it was a great area to grow up in. And as I mentioned a minute ago, it was called the West End of Boston, and there was a camp I used to go to in the summer and a lot of Irish kids, Italian kids, Jewish kids. There was just a potpourri of different heritage. So it was great to see all the guys. And I started to go out with a young lady, and I didn't marry her, it was someone else.

So it was great, great homecoming. I was in good shape and ready to go on with my life.

Q: So, how did your services and experiences affect your life and your outlook on war and the military in general?

A: Well, I was lucky that when I got to this place, Yeong-do Po, Korea up near Seoul, if you look at a map, that I heard some guys that were there when the shooting was-- The Korean War was two or three years before there was an armistice, so there was some real people dying, and I thought of it that way, but I don't think I dwelled on it. I knew that this shooting had stopped. And there was no trouble. Well, the 38th Parallel still separated North and South Korea, and we had two men stay at this, they call it the 38th Parallel, and it was they were South Koreans on one side, North Koreans on the other, so I suppose there was always a chance of the war breaking out again, but I mean I, nobody dwelled on it or anything.

Q: So, what would you like people to know 100 years from now about either war or your experiences in the Korean War?

A: Ask me that question again.

Q: What would you like people to know 100 years from now?

A: Oh, I think in all respects that I was glad to serve my country. It was a good experience. And that America would always be ready for whatever comes, came or comes. So, a hundred years from now they might be talking about Trump or something.

Q: So, do you have any other stories or comments you would like to add?

A: No, not really. I mean it was a nice experience that I had and I appreciated it, and I was glad that I was able to be in the army. I had three brothers in the Navy, but I never made the-- Well, I got drafted into the army before I enlisted. I could have enlisted into the Navy.

Q: So, thank you so much for taking the time to do this with us.

A: Oh that's quite alright.

Q: We really appreciate to be able to include you in the Newton Talks Oral History Project.

A: Oh we're all set?

Q: All set.

[Side remarks]

END OF INTERVIEW